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Studies in Media

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### Merchants of Cool

The documentary “Merchants of Cool” displayed the many ways producers discover the new trends to sell their product. A group of researchers interviewed many teens on the streets that appeared to be “trend setters” and asked to take pictures of them; this is called “cool hunting.” They then study the pictures to get an idea of what the recent trend is based on what the “trend setters” are wearing. In my opinion, “cool hunting” does not exploit teens, more so it provides benefits and services for the company and, if they get the product out fast enough, to consumers as well. Teens love attention, so why wouldn’t they want a company taking pictures of them and referring to them as “trend setters”? One quote that stood out to me was “we can never keep up with the latest trends.” It’s very true, and it has always been true. An item of clothing or accessories will be what everyone is wearing at one point and, in a short period of time, they go out of style. By the time a company figures out what the latest trend is and attempts to target teens with their product, the product has already reached the peak of its existence and is failing to remain at that point. This does not necessarily mean the product will never reach that point again. For instance, I received my first pair of Vans at the end of elementary school, but they were not in style quite yet. I wore them out one day and my uncle says “wow! I can’t believe they are coming back in style. I remember having those as a teen.” About a year later, everyone was wearing Vans, and they still are. In sociology, my group researched the amount of students at

Santa Teresa who wear Vans, our results were 90%. Vans are a perfect example of products coming back in style. I also find it interesting, yet not surprising, that companies are targeting children as young as ten to research. Each generation seems to be maturing faster mentally. Kids in elementary school know more than I knew in junior high, listen to the same music as I do, and even contribute to the latest trends. The difference between younger generations now and when my generation was at that age is astonishing.

As a result, the documentary demonstrated what a company does to discover the latest trends and to sell their products. They “cool hunt” by targeting “trend setters,” they survey a group of teens, and they also try to beat time-frame of a product in style before it beats them. Although companies target younger audiences now, their results are still valid because the younger generations consist of “trend setters” as well.